

NSB 99-149
August 20, 1999

**NATIONAL SCIENCE BOARD
STATEMENT ON
ACTION OF THE KANSAS BOARD OF EDUCATION ON EVOLUTION**

The National Science Board notes with sadness and deep concern the recent action of the Kansas Board of Education to remove evolution as a topic for required teaching and testing in the state's science curriculum. Although the Kansas Board's vote allows local schools to continue teaching evolution in science classes, teaching and learning stand to suffer.

Evolution is a well-documented process – and the rich scientific debate about its precise nature will continue to contribute to our knowledge base. But biology, like every science, does not exist in isolation. The Kansas action removed a key element from the body of scientific knowledge that **schoolchildren need to learn** and, in so doing, diminished the quality of education that they are likely to receive.

At a time of already-profound concern about the quality of mathematics and science education in our Nation's schools, the Kansas action is a retreat from responsibility. A school board, whether elected or appointed, is expected to act not only in its community's best interest, but also in the national interest. America's children will someday be expected to think, vote, and participate in the global economy and local community debates – many grounded in the life sciences. An appreciation of the tensions among observation, explanation, theory, and fact will prepare them to be knowledgeable and effective citizens.

Parents, educators, and policymakers should regard damaging cuts to a state curriculum with dismay. Such decisions may be "local" but, if unchallenged, they will ultimately affect the quality of life in this Nation for years to come.

The National Science Board serves as the governing board of the National Science Foundation and provides advice to the President and the Congress on matters of national science and engineering policy.